

# Romans – Gospel of God Exalted

*Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver*

Thursday February 27, 2025

## Memory Verse

**Romans 11: 34-35 (NLT)** <sup>34</sup> For who can know the LORD's thoughts? Who knows enough to give him advice? <sup>35</sup> And who has given him so much that he needs to pay it back? (<sup>36</sup> *For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory. All glory to him forever! Amen*).

## God Has Not Canceled His Promises to Israel

### part 3 continued

### His Setting Israel Aside Is Purposeful: To Glorify God

**Romans 11:30-36 NLT** <sup>30</sup> Once, you Gentiles were rebels against God, but when the people of Israel rebelled against him, God was merciful to you instead. <sup>31</sup> Now they are the rebels, and God's mercy has come to you so that they, too, will share in God's mercy. <sup>32</sup> For God has imprisoned everyone in disobedience so he could have mercy on everyone. <sup>33</sup> Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways! <sup>34</sup> For who can know the LORD's thoughts? Who knows enough to give him advice? <sup>35</sup> And who has given him so much that he needs to pay it back? <sup>36</sup> For everything comes from him and exists by his power and is intended for his glory. All glory to him forever! Amen.

### POINT 4 - TO GLORIFY GOD'S GENEROSITY

**30** For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, **31** so these also now have been disobedient, in order that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. **32** For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all. (11:30–32) NASB

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**Mercy** carries the basic idea of having a compassion for those in need that leads to meeting their need. Because man's greatest need is to have his sins removed and be given spiritual life, God's **mercy** generously provides just that.

The psalmists declared, "Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness [mercy] to all who call upon Thee" (**Ps. 86:5**), and "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His lovingkindness [mercy] is everlasting" (**Ps. 136:1**). Solomon testified before the Lord: "Thou hast shown great lovingkindness [mercy] to Thy servant David my father, according as he walked before Thee in truth and righteousness and uprightness of heart toward Thee; and Thou hast reserved for him this great lovingkindness [mercy], that Thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day" (**1 Kings 3:6**).

In his first letter, Peter wrote, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *according to His great mercy* has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (**1 Pet. 1:3**), added; cf. Eph. 2:4–5). Just as He bestows forgiveness, which is *not* deserved, at the same time He cancel His punishment, which is deserved.

Paul's explanation has gone full circle, as it were. Because of Israel's unbelief, the nation was partially and temporarily set aside and the gospel of salvation was extended to the Gentiles. And if God extended His grace to pagan Gentiles even while they were in unbelief, how much more surely will He extend His grace again to His chosen people Israel while *they* are in unbelief? Specifically, he says, if **you**, as Gentiles, **were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of Israel's disobedience**, how much more will Israel, **because of the mercy shown to you** Gentiles, **also ... now be shown mercy**.

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Whether for Gentile or for Jew, salvation is based on mercy, not merit. It is an expression of God's sovereign and generous grace. About his own gracious salvation, Paul testified: "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service; even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. And yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus" **(1 Tim. 1:12–14)**. In his second letter to Corinth the apostle calls the Lord "the Father of mercies" **(2 Cor. 1:3)**.

Through the centuries, theologians have struggled with what is called "divine justice", the explanation of God's righteousness and *omnipotence* in the light of evil. No doubt almost every believer has at some time wondered about where evil came from and why God allowed it to enter His perfect world. Although God's Word does not fully answer that question, Paul gives at least a partial explanation, declaring that **God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.**

**Disobedience** denotes intentional and obstinate refusal to believe, acknowledge, or obey. In his letter to Ephesus, Paul twice refers to unrepentant sinners as "sons of disobedience" **(Eph. 2:2; 5:6)**.

Man's sin, manifested in his willful **disobedience**, provides a means for God to demonstrate the magnitude and graciousness of His **mercy**. Were there no **disobedience**, there would be no need for and there could be no expression of God's **mercy**. To reveal Himself as merciful, He permitted sin. **He has shut up**

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**all**—the whole world, Jew and Gentile—in **disobedience** and unbelief in order that He **might show mercy to all** who repent of their sin and turn to Him for gracious salvation.

In His sovereign omnipotence, God has allowed man intellectually, morally, and spiritually to fall into a state of sin to the extent that, on his own, he is unable to be convinced of God's truth, specifically the truth that he is lost and condemned and that he is powerless in himself to change his condition. God allowed man to fall into sin in order that his only hope would be divine **mercy**.

It must be noted that this saving mercy is shown **to all**. The perfect, satisfactory work of Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection has met the demands of the justice and holiness of God, and thereby has removed every barrier to forgiveness for **all**, and any person who seeks forgiveness and salvation will receive it. Christ died for the world and is reconciling the world to Himself because He loves the world. **“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life”**.

As Paul explained earlier in this epistle, the Lord gave His law “that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God” (**Rom. 3:19**). Sin came to all mankind through the Fall, and knowledge of and accountability for sin came “to all the world” through the Law. “But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested,” he continues, “being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace [expressed in His mercy] through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (**vv. 21–24**).

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does God's mercy provide for mankind?
2. In vss. 30-32 why has God shut up all in disobedience? Did God plan the disobedience of both the Gentiles and Israel? Explain your answer.
3. What stood out to you in this portion of the lesson?

## POINT 5 - To GLORIFY GOD'S Incomprehensibility.

**33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! 34 For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? 35 Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? 36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen. (11:33–36) NASB**

Paul bursts out with a marvelous *doxology*, in which he rejoices that God's temporarily setting Israel aside glorifies His incomprehensibility. The full wonder of God's gracious omnipotence is wholly beyond human understanding. It staggers even the most mature Christian mind, including the mind of the apostle himself. Having completed his argument and affirmed God's sovereignty, integrity, and generosity, Paul has nothing more to add but a paean of praise for **the depth of the riches** of God's **wisdom and knowledge**. Further description and explanation are completely beyond the realm of human expression and comprehension. Like a mountain climber who has reached the summit of Mt. Everest, the apostle can

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only stand awestruck at God's beauty and majesty. Unable to further explain an infinite and holy God to finite and sinful men, he can only acknowledge that God's **judgments are unsearchable** and **His ways are unfathomable!**

**Unfathomable** literally refers to footprints that are untrackable, such as those of an animal that a hunter is unable to follow. It is the exact idea expressed by the psalmist in declaring of God: "Thy way was in the sea, and Thy paths in the mighty waters, and Thy *footprints* may not be known" (**Ps. 77:19**). Only God's own "Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God" (**1 Cor. 2:10**).

Scripture is God's divine revelation of Himself and of His will, and He has not given it to mock and confuse men but to enlighten them and bring them to Himself. The Lord has made certain that any person who genuinely seeks Him can know enough of His truth to be saved. Although "a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (**1 Cor. 2:14**), God nevertheless gives the gracious assurance that "you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (**Jer. 29:13**).

Believers who faithfully study God's Word can learn and have a certain understanding of His truth—all that is necessary "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness," in order for us to "be adequate, equipped for every good work" (**2 Tim. 3:16–17**). Our gracious God gives us more than all the truth we need to know Him, trust Him, and serve Him. But no matter how diligently we may have studied His Word, we must confess with David that "such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain to it" (**Ps. 139:6**).

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As his praise ascends in this doxology, Paul presents three *rhetorical* questions which serve to exalt God, the answer to each of which is obvious and the same. The first two questions, quoted from the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament), are: **For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?** (cf. Isa. 40:13). The very asking shows both questions to have but one answer: No one. Men can ponder **the mind of the Lord**, but only **the Lord** Himself can know it. Among men, “in abundance of counselors there is victory,” or safety (**Prov. 11:14**), but God’s only **counselor** is Himself. It is not the countless *unrevealed* things about God of which Paul is speaking, but the depths of the things which we *do* know through His self-revelation. Yet even these partially knowable truths conceal elements that are far beyond our comprehension (**cf. Deut. 29:29**).

Paul’s third question is also taken from the Old Testament. Quoting Job, he asks, **Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again?** (cf. Job 41:11). Because no one was before God and none can give *to* God what has not first been received *from* Him, the answer here must also be: No one. God is sovereign, self-sufficient, and free from any obligation except those He places on Himself. He owes the Jew nothing and the Gentile nothing.

We stand in awe before our gracious Lord and rejoice that **from Him and through Him and to Him are all things**. With the twenty-four elders, who “will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne,” we proclaim, “Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created” (**Rev. 4:10–11**; cf. 1 Cor. 15:24–28).

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**To Him be the glory forever. Amen.**

That is the inspired apostle's culminating comment on the first eleven chapters of this magnificent epistle. After all the great realities of salvation, Paul ends with an ascription of glory to his Lord. This simple doxology draws a clear line between the doctrinal section and the final five chapters on Christian duty.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- 1. Vss. 33-35 is one of the greatest expressions of praise and adoration in the entire Bible. How does Paul describe God and His works?**
- 2. In vs. 36, what is Paul saying and how do you respond to what he says?**
- 3. What is most meaningful to you in this lesson and how can you apply it to your life?**

**Closing Prayer**